

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

PART 1: PLAN OVERVIEW

Introduction

The Norwood Pedestrian Plan is organized to provide the user with information ranging from the nature of pedestrian planning, to how to get a sidewalk built. The Plan is divided into four parts, each with various sections, and Appendices. The following will help orient the reader in how to use this document:

PART 1: PLAN OVERVIEW

This Overview includes the **Executive Summary**, a four-page pullout synopsis of the Plan's most important elements. The **Vision, Scope & Process** section outlines the Town's need for the Plan, its pedestrian vision, and how the Plan can help bring about that vision. A brief description of how the Plan was assembled is also provided. The **Benefits of a Pedestrian Lifestyle** section provides some general background information about pedestrian planning and some examples of how it could benefit the Town of Norwood.

PART 2: CURRENT CONDITIONS, NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A description of the Town's existing layout, pedestrian amenities, and pedestrian barriers and constraints is provided in the **Existing Conditions & Trends** section. It details current conditions that impact pedestrian planning throughout the community, from "big picture" issues, to the condition of individual sidewalks, crosswalks and trails. This portion of the Plan also describes prevailing population trends of the Town that have direct bearing on current and future pedestrian needs. The **Current Policies, Plans, & Programs** section provides detailed analysis of planning documents and Town ordinance, and how they particularly aid or hinder pedestrian-friendly development. The section also describes current pedestrian-oriented programs at work. In the **Key Areas & Issues** section, unique opportunities are described of how the Town can better provide for its citizens' pedestrian needs and shape its future in significantly positive ways. This portion of the Plan sets the stage for the recommendations that follow.

PART 3: PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

This portion of the Plan describes the recommendations being made to improve Norwood's pedestrian future. It begins with **Recommended Policies & Ordinance Modifications**, which integrates pedestrian planning measures into the Town's overall planning processes. Real change comes through active involvement by citizens who care. A selection of **Recommended Programs** is provided that will assist and guide their efforts. **Project Recommendations & Implementation Strategies** provides a more focused description of actions that should be taken to correct current problems and initiate future projects. Specific projects are described in detail in the **Project Identification and Priority List**. Here individual projects are ranked in priority and explanations are provided as to how each of them can be implemented. The succeeding section provides information about **Recommended Maintenance Programs** appropriate to each type of project.

PART 4: FUNDING

This portion of the Plan discusses how to pay for projects. It begins with **Sample Cost Estimates for Facilities**, and then discusses **Funding Strategies**, offers **Local Budget Recommendations**, and concludes with the local **Plan Adoption and Approval process**.

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Section 1: Executive Summary

See attachment

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Section 2: Vision, Scope, and Process

The Need

The Town of Norwood has an immediate and ever-increasing need to improve pedestrian conditions for its citizens. But in addition to current needs, there is also great opportunity for the Town to work toward longer-term goals that will help make pedestrian travel a truly viable mode of transportation within the Town.

Though the Town's population has declined somewhat in recent years, traffic conditions are becoming increasingly hazardous to pedestrians. This is due largely to NC 52, which bisects the Town and forms Main Street. Within the town limits, this state highway carries over 10,000 vehicles per day. Approximately 15-20% of that is classified as truck traffic.



NC 52 at Anson Street

In summary, the challenges this pedestrian population encounters result generally from the following conditions:

1. Increasing vehicular traffic along NC 52
2. Residential communities that feature very little in the way of street, sidewalk or trail connections both internally or to the surrounding area
3. Too few sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities throughout Town

Specific actions are required to address each of these conditions, but such actions are most effective when they flow from an overall strategy that the community can understand, support and implement. This comprehensive pedestrian transportation plan enables the Town to plan for future growth and guide it, instead of simply reacting to it.

The Vision

Through the pedestrian planning process, the Town and its citizens have expressed a clear vision for their community. Norwood is to be a Town that provides its residents opportunity to visit local businesses, schools, parks and other community destinations in a safe and convenient manner without having to own or entirely depend upon an automobile. This is particularly important for significant segments of Norwood's population that cannot drive, namely the elderly, the poor and children under driving age. Because of existing traffic conditions along Main Street, the vision places a high premium on finding ways to make pedestrian conditions safer along the main spine of the Town.

As "Gateway to Lake Tillery", Norwood desires to serve its own community and the region by providing greater access to the Lake. Through the creation and improvement of public destination points along its share of Lake Tillery's shoreline, Norwood could attract more

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visitors and encourage environmentally friendly development. These destination points would be linked to other parks, as well as business and residential areas in Town through sidewalk connections and trails, which would then continue into the region. Features such as these have been identified in national literature as being of great importance in attracting new investment into a community.

Furthermore, Norwood desires to maintain a small town atmosphere where neighbor can meet neighbor and sidewalk conversations are the norm. The community's vision supports amenities that not only permit but encourage its residents and visitors to walk and visit with each other—amenities such as sidewalks, streetlights, street trees, benches, planters, etc. that add comfort, visual interest, and create safe havens and resting points.

In order to see this vision through, an ongoing coordinated effort must be instituted. The charter for this effort is the Norwood Pedestrian Plan. This Plan will serve the Town as a:

1. Compelling tool to promote the Town's pedestrian vision
2. Effective source for educating decision makers and the general public about the value and methods of making Norwood a pedestrian-friendly community
3. Clear blueprint for the revision of Town ordinances and policies that address development in order that all will support the same unified goals
4. Comprehensive guide to the implementation and improvement of pedestrian routes and amenities
5. Firm basis for seeking assistance in the form of grants and other support from various outside sources in furthering the Plan's implementation.

The Goals

As the Plan is embraced and utilized in the ways described above, both immediate concerns and long-term goals for the Town can be realized:

- Walkability and connectivity become guiding principles for decision-making, so that walking becomes a real option as a transportation choice.
- Pedestrian safety is made a top priority, so that pedestrians can feel safe accessing downtown business areas, and other areas in Town.
- Pedestrian facilities become accessible to all members of the community.
- Attractive sidewalks and trails link significant destinations, making them accessible by foot as well as vehicle. Amenities are provided so that walking is not seen as “the last alternative” but the “preferred alternative” to reach points within walking distance.
- The Norwood pedestrian network is linked, where appropriate, to larger county and regional networks.
- The Norwood Pedestrian Plan provides a clear “road map” of where, when, and how the Town proceeds to make improvements to its pedestrian facilities, to achieve the aforementioned goals.
- Norwood clearly offers to residents and visitors the features that make life in the community rewarding.

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The Scope

In order to meet these goals, this Norwood Pedestrian Plan examines a broad scope of pedestrian-related issues and recommends actions that address them in a comprehensive manner, including:

1. Policy and ordinance revision
2. Educational programs and initiatives
3. Comprehensive system planning
4. Facility standards and guidelines
5. Project identification and prioritization
6. Project specific planning and development process
7. Cost estimation
8. Funding and local budget recommendations
9. Project implementation and construction
10. Maintenance
11. Individual project evaluation process

The Methodology

This Plan was developed using methodology approved by the North Carolina Department of Transportation Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Division. The process included the following steps:

- Step 1:** Gather relevant documents relating to pedestrian concerns in the Town.
- Step 2:** Determine the project scope, schedule, points of contact with Town Staff; identify stakeholder groups, potential Steering Committee members, target meeting dates and planning budget
- Step 3:** Conduct an initial physical survey of the Town and gather additional input on pedestrian conditions from the community.
- Step 4:** Create composite maps of existing conditions to include current facilities and traffic conditions.
- Step 5:** The Town Commission appoints the project Steering Committee to review the project maps and other information, provide additional stakeholder input, and guide the development of the Plan.
- Step 6:** Conduct Stakeholder Interviews on pedestrian needs and preferences.
- Step 7:** Conduct an interactive public meeting to review initial Steering Committee input and interview results with the general public, obtain feedback, and

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gather additional input from the public on pedestrian and mobility issues and concerns.

- Step 8:** Review the public meeting results with the Steering Committee in order to gather direction for preparation of a Draft Pedestrian Plan.
- Step 9:** Prepare the Draft Pedestrian Plan based input from the Steering Committee and citizen comments.
- Step 10:** Submit the draft plan to the Steering Committee and NCDOT for preliminary review and comment.
- Step 11:** Facilitate a follow-up public meeting to review preliminary Pedestrian Plan and address how the input received through previous public processes has been incorporated into the draft Plan.
- Step 12:** Revise the Plan based on input received and meet with the Steering Committee to finalize approval of the Plan.
- Step 13:** Submit the Plan to the Town Commission and to the Planning Board for review. Additionally, submit the Plan to the Rocky River RPO for endorsement.
- Step 14:** Upon adoption of Plan, furnish the Town and NCDOT with the Plan with its associated maps.

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Section 3: Benefits of a Pedestrian Lifestyle

Only a few decades ago, streets and sidewalks served as the center of neighborhood life, where people of all ages walked, biked, shopped, ate, played, and met their neighbors. But today, streets with this kind of activity are the exception rather than the rule. Towns and cities are full of barriers that discourage walking and often make a pedestrian feel like an outcast in a world made only for cars. Addressing these barriers means more than just building sidewalks or adding trails. Land use and transportation planning, ordinance revision, and developing economic incentives for businesses all play important roles toward creating an environment that makes walking easy, safe and convenient, and brings vitality back to the streets.

Investments in a community through pedestrian-oriented improvements may, in just a few short years, show visible and economic results. Such improvements can help make the Norwood community healthier, more vibrant and a more attractive place to live, visit, work and own a business. Such revitalized communities offer more incentive to prospective residents and businesses.

Some direct benefits of the pedestrian lifestyle can be summarized in the following statements:

1. Safety

Drivers familiar with a community learn which streets are likely to have pedestrian traffic. The more pedestrians likely to be encountered, the more cautious experienced drivers are apt to be. In this way, pedestrian activity is self-protective. The more pedestrians using a street, the safer that street becomes for pedestrians.

2. Local Economy

Pedestrian-oriented streets encourage shoppers to linger. Retail and commercial developers have learned that walkable context sells. Furthermore, works such as Richard Florida's *Rise of the Creative Class* indicate that the population segments most likely to contribute to thriving economic conditions are attracted by amenities such as walkability, street trees, linkages to outdoor activities, etc. In short, a pedestrian-oriented community is more likely to attract as new residents the type of people most likely to help stimulate the local economy. The current street network of Norwood, and the quantity of underdeveloped land within the Town, particularly nearer the Lake, creates enormous potential for the Town to develop into a very walkable, loose grid system, which would strengthen pockets of smaller-scale commercial development in various parts of Town.

3. Public Health

A key concern in all aspects of community planning and design is the health, safety and welfare of citizens. There is growing recognition of how the built environment influences health-related behavior. Decisions about zoning, transportation, land use and community design influence the distances people travel by foot and by car, and the general safety and attractiveness of neighborhoods for walking. Fitness experts agree that regular daily activity is the key to good health. Walking is the most affordable and

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convenient way for most people to stay active. Whenever walking becomes a reasonable alternative to driving, many people will choose to walk rather than drive. As walking becomes a more significant part of daily life in Norwood, this will yield healthier lifestyles and ultimately impact community health care costs in a positive manner.

4. Elderly and Youth Friendly

When communities are pedestrian-friendly, the elderly retain greater independence and freedom, and young people are free to rely less on parents to drive them to school and other activities. As young people become accustomed to walking and biking, they are also less likely to depend on automobiles for short trips as they grow older. With a more complete system of sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities, walking becomes a safer and more reasonable option, particularly to those who need it most. The senior community in Norwood would particularly benefit from increased pedestrian-friendly measures.

5. Friendly to Disabled Populations

Another group for whom pedestrian friendliness means independence are those with disabilities. For those who cannot drive independently, mobility is severely limited in communities that are designed only for car usage. Walkable communities can be designed to maximize the independence and mobility for disabled persons, in ways that auto-dependent communities cannot.

6. Improved Environment

Street trees and other forms of landscaping are an integral part of pedestrian friendly communities. Street trees not only make pedestrians more comfortable and increase the likelihood that people will choose to walk, they also moderate temperatures, reduce storm water runoff, and contribute to cleaner air. A pedestrian-friendly environment will also contribute positively to air quality by reducing unneeded vehicular trips.

7. Reduced Crime and Better Emergency Access

Streets that draw more pedestrians and encourage social interaction tend to have lower crime rates and other social problems than those that are isolated and unpopulated. Furthermore, streets that are connected for pedestrian-friendliness are also much more accessible to emergency vehicles such as EMS and fire—they have more than one way to get to an emergency location. Encouraging increased connectivity in future developments in Norwood will help the current system of streets function best for both pedestrians and vehicles.

8. Cultural and Community Life

Towns that feature interesting streets and public spaces with active pedestrian life become vibrant cultural and economic centers that draw visitors from the surrounding region. This is particularly true when these towns offer unique natural features, such as lake frontage in Norwood.

9. Transportation

Walkable communities have the most affordable and most efficient transportation system available. And as Norwood continues to develop around walkable commercial

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centers, it also better suited for eventually incorporating public transit systems, such as buses or shuttles.

While it would be true to say that “pedestrian friendliness” is not a cure-all for all the economic, social, or political ills that modern society experiences, it is also true that the creation of more livable public spaces and the de-isolation of people by getting them out of their cars, is an important part of the remedy. A surprising number of people, when asked to recall or identify venues that make them feel comfortable or in which they would like to live, work, and play, will identify tree-lined streets with sidewalks, and pedestrians of all ages using them.

